



# BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY



This document consists of a set of principles which, if committed to and acted upon by members of the Riverside community, will help us become a truly inclusive twenty-first-century city. Such an inclusive community would be based on two fundamental premises. First, all Riversiders should be and should see themselves as respected, contributing members of the community. Second, all Riversiders should be bound by a common set of principles based on fairness of treatment, recognition of rights, acceptance of responsibilities, commitment to equality, and dedication to expanding opportunities for all.

A city of considerable racial, ethnic, religious, and other types of diversity, Riverside has etched a complex history. That history has included both significant efforts to achieve greater justice, equality, and understanding, as well as unfortunate periods and events that have demonstrated the need for increased commitment, ideas, and action to work toward these goals.

As we move into the demographically-challenging, globally-shrinking twenty-first century, Riversiders face opportunities and challenges related to diversity: race and religion, gender and ethnicity, language and sexual orientation, diverse abilities and disabilities. Intersecting with such dimensions of diversity are other critical underlying factors such as economic and educational disparities. Therefore, it is increasingly imperative that Riversiders - as individuals, as groups, and as institutions - assume the responsibility of facing the challenges and seizing the opportunities created by diversity.

While recognizing that this will be a long, ongoing, and evolving process, as Riversiders we believe that the following principles provide a basis for building that more inclusive community.



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# INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

INCREASING DIVERSITY MEANS THAT ALL OF US, AS INDIVIDUALS, NEED TO LEARN CONTINUOUSLY ABOUT OUR DIFFERENCES WHILE ALSO SEEKING COMMON GROUND BASED ON OUR SIMILARITIES, OUR LINKED GOALS, AND OUR COMMITMENT TO THE BEST IN BASIC HUMAN AND AMERICAN VALUES.

- 1. Such learning will necessarily be life-long because of such factors as the continuous arrival of newcomers, both individuals and groups.
- 2. This learning will require ongoing dialogue, in which we should strive for openness and honesty, both in our everyday lives and in formal settings.
- 3. Honest, open, and successful dialogue requires that each of us be willing to listen to, attempt to understand, and give consideration to voices, perceptions, and interpretations that may challenge, even conflict with, some of our personal beliefs.
- 4. As we listen to and learn from others, we need to show sincere respect for them as individuals and as groups, even if we disagree deeply with the ideas that they express and beliefs that they espouse, so that differences of belief, opinion, and interpretation do not result in divisiveness.
- 5. We also need to recognize that some learning may involve unlearning certain personal beliefs and perceptions of others.
- 6. Finally, as individuals each of us should be willing to move beyond words to action, walking the walk of inclusiveness, not merely talking the talk.



# GROUP RESPONSIBILITY

LIKE ANY LARGE CITY, RIVERSIDE IS BOTH A COMMUNITY AND THE HOME TO MANY SMALLER COMMUNITIES, SUCH AS EXTENDED FAMILIES, NEIGHBORHOODS, SCHOOLS, RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS, ETHNIC ORGANIZATIONS, YOUTH GROUPS, AND DIVERSE AFFINITY ASSOCIATIONS. A KEY TO RIVERSIDE'S FUTURE WILL BE OUR ABILITY TO DEVELOP A BALANCE BETWEEN UNITY (A COLLECTIVE SENSE OF COMMUNITY) AND DIVERSITY (THE INEVITABILITY OF SMALLER COMMUNITIES).

- 1. In their best sense, groups serve constructive purposes in the lives of their members.
- 2. While it is natural for groups to aggregate, this sometimes escalates into de facto self-segregation.
- 3. To avoid such self-segregation, members of all groups need to make efforts to build intergroup as well as interpersonal bridges that strengthen social cohesion, reduce misunderstanding, foster intergroup learning, and forge bonds across group lines.
- 4. To achieve such goals people need to be willing to venture out of their comfort zones and experience the cultures of others.
- 5. In crossing lines it is vital to recognize that all groups have their special values, concerns, beliefs, emotional attachments, collective experiences, communication styles, and sense of identity.
- 6. Such experiences and interactions can provide us with opportunities, as groups as well as individually, to share differences, discover commonalities, and draw strength from each other.
- 7. Whatever our group attachments, we all need to realize that a more inclusive community necessitates the building of intergroup partnerships and the development of common goals.
- 8. For such a community-building process to succeed, all groups must have the opportunity to give voice to their hopes, concerns, perceptions, experiences, values, and beliefs... in short, enjoy the right to be heard as well as accept the responsibility to listen.



# INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

RIVERSIDE INSTITUTIONS, BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, SHOULD BE ROLE MODELS OF INCLUSIVENESS BY DEMONSTRATING A COMMITMENT TO FAIRNESS, EQUALITY, RESPECT, AND UNDERSTANDING.

- 1. Institutions should create environments that foster better interpersonal and intergroup relations, respect, and understanding.
- 2. In addition, institutions should provide formal opportunities to learn about diversity.
- 3. Such opportunities may be of various types, such as making diversity an important curricular theme in K-12 schools, colleges, and universities and instituting diversity training or providing other diversity learning initiatives within government agencies, private businesses, non-profit organizations, religious institutions, youth associations, local media, and other entities.
- 4. While institutions cannot legislate people's hearts and minds, the adoption and enforcement of selective rules, protocols, and procedures can help foster fairness, equality, respect, and understanding.

# THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

ALL RIVERSIDERS NEED TO RECOGNIZE THAT CHANGE IS INEVITABLE AND THAT WE CAN INFLUENCE ITS DIRECTIONS WHILE ALSO MAKING CONSTRUCTIVE ADAPTATIONS.

- 1. To make a diverse, inclusive community work, such adaptations must be mutual, with all of us doing our parts to adapt constructively to changing conditions and new issues.
- 2. To expect others to make all of the adaptations while we remain adamant in our own positions is a recipe for polarization and divisiveness.
- 3. We need to recognize that some of these mutual adaptations may be challenging, even painful, maybe involving a sense of loss, but adaptations are necessary if we are to become a community of full inclusiveness and understanding.
- 4. It is also inevitable that there will be disagreements over the meaning and implementation of such basic ideas as acceptance, respect, justice, and equality.
- 5. Therefore we must dedicate ourselves to the long-range, ongoing process of honestly sharing ideas, seeking to understand alternate perspectives, and differing without dividing.



WITH THESE PRINCIPLES IN MIND, WE AS RIVERSIDERS - ACCEPTING OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS INDIVIDUALS, AS MEMBERS OF GROUPS, AND AS PARTICIPANTS IN INSTITUTIONS - HEREBY COMMIT OURSELVES TO THE GOAL OF BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY.